

We Claim:

1. A method of developing and communicating information regarding the automotive industry that provides a market based system for sustaining the environment by using the Internet, said method comprising the steps of:
 - a) identifying cars and light-trucks as a class of vehicles manufactured by the automotive industry from which consumers may choose a vehicle for purchase and for which consumers may desire to have environmental performance information to consider as a factor in selecting a vehicle for purchase,
 - b) establishing an e-commerce company for evaluating the individual vehicles of said class of vehicles in respect to the environmental performance of each individual vehicle, said company being independent of the members of the automotive industry.
 - c) said e-commerce company developing an objective environmental performance rating system based upon a rating algorithm driven by quality assured data,

d) obtaining said data over the Internet from government sources and private sector sources,

5 e) processing the data into ratings in accordance with said algorithm to identify the vehicles which are the most environmentally sensitive,

10 f) presenting physical awards in recognition of the most environmentally sensitive vehicles to the manufacturers of those vehicles,

15 g) said e-commerce company establishing an Internet web site to communicate to consumers and other stake-holders the rating system and the identification of vehicles with the highest ratings, the award winning vehicles,

20 h) said e-commerce company facilitating the promotion of the results of said environmental performance evaluation in accordance with said ratings by companies winning the awards and by e-commerce product information/buying services to communicate to consumers and other stake-holders, via the Internet and other media, identification of the vehicles which are the most environmentally sensitive.

i) whereby consumers desiring to help sustain the environment are enabled to select and buy a vehicle that is among the top environmentally sensitive vehicles of the

5 available vehicles and companies offering such vehicles achieve increased sales and are encouraged thereby to develop and sell new vehicles that are more environmentally sensitive,

j) and whereby the environment is
10 improved because more environmentally sensitive vehicles are purchased and developed instead of less environmentally sensitive vehicles, thereby establishing a market-driven, as opposed to government regulated, approach to sustaining the
15 environment.

2. A method as defined in Claim 1 for identifying to consumers via the Internet, in a consumer friendly, industry compatible and timely
20 manner said award-winning vehicles wherein said method includes the steps of:

k) identifying, by brand name and model, the different vehicles offered for sale by
25 different companies in the automotive industry

such identification being the same as that used in advertising by the manufacturers and retailers,

1) producing said ratings in timed relationships with the beginning of the model year 5 of the industry,

m) establishing and implementing communication plans for identifying the top environmental performers to consumers for the model year whereby consumers will be enabled to 10 sustain the environment by purchasing the identified vehicles and are benefited by an improved environment and benefited by improved vehicle operating costs.

15 3. A method as defined by Claim 1 for helping a vehicle manufacturer to increase it's sales of vehicles which are among the best in environmental performance ratings, wherein said method includes the steps of:

20 n) establishing a national recognition for said ratings and said physical awards, o) facilitating the use by the vehicle manufacturer of the rating system and the use of

the awards in its advertising and other promotional activity,

5 p) whereby the manufacturer gains marketplace creditability for the environmental performance of its vehicles and gains image enhancement and whereby it can differentiate its products on the basis of environmental performance and third-party validation of its award-winning models.

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4. A method as defined by claim 1 for decreasing the impact of the automotive industry on the environment by enabling consumers to select for purchase those vehicles that have been 15 identified as among the best in environmental performance, wherein said method includes the steps of :

20 q) developing and implementing a communication plan that gains recognition and acceptance for the rating system,

r) facilitating the advertisement and the identification of the top-rated vehicles to induce consumers to buy the top-rated vehicles,

s) whereby the impact of vehicles on the environment will be decreased.

5. A method as defined by claim 1 for helping automotive e-commerce businesses (including e-commerce product information services and e-commerce buying services) increase the number of visitors to their web sites,
 - 10 t) said e-commerce company establishing links between its web site and the web sites of the automotive e-commerce businesses to permit visitors to the web sites of the automotive e-commerce businesses to obtain independent verification of ratings and awards,
 - 15 u) whereby the automotive e-commerce businesses will enjoy a better public image for providing environmental performance data and whereby consumer-usable environmental information will favorably differentiate the automotive e-commerce businesses and provide increased revenue for them.

6. A method of developing and communicating information regarding an industry that provides a

market-based system for sustaining the environment by using the Internet, said method comprising the steps of:

- a) selecting an industry from a group of industries having needs for improved environmental communications and marketing for its products,
- b) identifying a class of products manufactured by the selected industry from which consumers may choose a product for purchase and for which consumers may desire to have environmental performance information to consider as a factor in selecting a product for purchase,
- c) establishing a new e-commerce company for evaluating the individual products of said class of products in respect to the environmental performance of each individual product, said company being independent of the members of the selected industry.
- d) said e-commerce company developing an objective environmental performance rating system of the products based upon a rating algorithm driven by quality assured data,

e) obtaining said data from government sources and private sector sources,

f) processing the data into ratings in accordance with said algorithm to identify the 5 products which are the most environmentally sensitive,

g) and presenting physical awards in recognition of the most environmentally sensitive products to the manufacturers of those products,

10 h) establishing web site to communicate the rating system and the top environmental performers to consumers and other stakeholders,

i) said e-commerce company

15 facilitating the promotion of the results of said environmental performance evaluation in accordance with said ratings by companies winning the awards and e-commerce product information/buying services to communicate to consumers and other stakeholders,

20 holders, via the Internet and other media identification of the products which are the most environmentally sensitive.

j) whereby consumers, having an unfulfilled need to sustain the environment, are

enabled to select and buy an award winning vehicle

that is among the top environmentally sensitive

products of the available products and companies

offering such products achieve increased sales and

5 are encouraged thereby to develop and sell new

products that are more environmentally sensitive,

k) and whereby the environment is

improved because more environmentally sensitive

products are purchased and developed instead of

10 less environmentally sensitive products, thereby

establishing a market-driven, as opposed to

government regulated, approach to improving the

environment.